Peace
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World-Wide Education for Peace

Report of the World Conference on Education, Held in San Francisco June 28-July 5, 1923

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World-Wide Education for Peace

Report of the World Conference on Education Held in San Francisco, June 28–July 5, 1923

By Isabelle Kendig-Gill

For the first time in history, a World Conference of Educators has been held to discuss the promotion of international peace and good will through the schools.

In the words of the agenda,

> "The greatest task which lies ahead of the school in all lands is that of preparing the way for a new order of international justice, friendship, and good will. Upon the instruction of the youth of the nations lies the responsibility of enlarging the national conceptions and promoting good will among the nations of the earth. Entirely new values and standards of judging need to be created. The emphasis must be placed upon the valor and patriotism of peace. If it is possible to set up a series of ideals such as a nation should become and to teach them to the rising generation, these ideals could eventually be realized."

This was the keynote to the deliberations of the Conference. Its most significant result was the creation of a permanent World Federation of Educational Associations which will serve as the instrument for realizing these ideals.

Besides the organization of a permanent Federation to carry on its work, the Conference at its final plenary session made a number of important recommendations for the promotion of better international understanding and the development of mutual respect and good will between nations. These suggestions include the appointment of educational attachés for each embassy or legation, the provision of scholarships for graduate students in international subjects, the development of universal library service, the immediate revision of school text books to conform to standards of justice and impartiality, the development through the regular school program of the ideals of international friendship and good will, and the observance of an international Good-Will Day. Other plans adopted by the conference provide for health training, universal education and rural life conservation.

HOW THE CONFERENCE WAS ORGANIZED

The World Conference on Education met in San Francisco, June 28 to July 5, 1923, the meeting having been called by the National Education Association of the United States. For several years this association has had a standing committee on Foreign Relations, which has been studying the bearing of education on world peace. One of the first, however, to suggest the idea of such a conference was President Masaryk of Czecho-Slovakia.

The plan receiving immediate approval, the National Education Association set to work at once to organize the meeting and make the necessary contacts abroad. All nations were asked to participate in the Conference, invitations being sent to the officers of all educational institutions whose names could be secured, to ministers of education, and prominent educators. The response everywhere was prompt and cordial and many countries appointed official delegates.

Thus the groups which finally assembled in San Francisco represented "more than thirty distinct racial groups and over fifty national divisions."* Many of the best-known educators and most influential men and women of the various countries took part in the deliberations. All expressed the desire not only to promote educational development but to direct that development toward the goal of world peace.

OBJECTS OF THE CONFERENCE

"While the Conference was not called as a peace movement," as Dr. Augustus O. Thomas, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, pointed out in his report to the National Education Association, "it was well known that the whole tendency of the results of such a conference would be to prolong the intervals between wars to such an extent that eventually war might cease.

> "Leagues of Nations, associations of nations, world courts, reduction conferences, peace treaties, and international agreements are and will be necessary to the ultimate welfare of mankind, but before the principles involved therein can be confirmed and established they must have definite spiritual values and these spiritual values must await the longer processes of education. Reforms affecting humanity require generations to consummate and establish."

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* Argentine, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Czecho-Slovakia, Ecuador, El Salvador, England, France, Germany, Greece, Hawaii, Honduras, Hungary, Italy, India, Indo-China, Japan, Jugo-Slavia, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Peru, Philippine Islands, Porto Rico, Roumania, South Africa, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United States, Uruguay, were among the countries represented.

The specific objectives of the Conference were thus formulated:

1. To promote friendship, justice, and good will among the nations of the earth.

2. To bring about a world-wide tolerance of the rights and privileges of all nations regardless of race or creed.

3. To develop an appreciation of the value and the inherited gifts of nationality through centuries of development and progress.

4. To secure more accurate and satisfying information and more adequate statements in the textbooks used in the schools of the various countries.

5. To foster a national comradeship and confidence which will produce a more sympathetic appreciation among all nations.

6. To inculcate into the minds and hearts of the rising generation those spiritual values necessary to carry forward the principles emphasized in the Conference on Limitation of Armaments.

7. Finally, throughout the world, in all schools, to emphasize the essential unity of mankind upon the evils of war and upon the absolute necessity of universal peace.

For working purposes the Conference was divided into seven major groups with definite agenda for each to consider. *

GROUP A.—INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION.

1. Educational Attaché

The Conference recommended the appointment of an educational attaché "who shall be a recognized educational expert of the highest rank," for each embassy or legation. If this is not always practicable it is suggested that the leading educational organizations of the country provide an educational representative.

* Only three formal sessions of the World Conference were held, the main work being done in the separate group meetings. The speakers at the opening session were: Dr. Augustus O. Thomas, the Chairman of the Conference, who explained its purpose, and then introduced Dr. William B. Owen, President of the National Education Association, who presided. Welcoming addresses were made by the President of the Board of Education of San Francisco; Dr. David Starr Jordan; and Miss Charl Williams, former President of the National Education Association. Responses were made by Dr. P. W. Kuo, President of the National Southeastern University, Nanking, China; the Honorable C. A. Panagopolous, Consul-General of Greece at San Francisco; and Professor John Adams of the University of London.

At the second formal meeting a message was read from Francisco J. Yanes, chief of the division of education of the Pan-American Union. Other speakers were Dr. Tasuku Harada, former President of Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan; H. W. Huntley, President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation; and Dr. A. E. Winship, Editor of the Journal of Education (Boston).

The third formal meeting was held jointly with the National Education Association, July 5, in the immense Civic Auditorium of San Francisco. Addresses were made by President Ray Lyman Wilbur of Stanford University; Dr. M. Sawayanagi, President of the Japanese Imperial Education Association; E. J. Sainsbury, President of the National Union of Teachers of England; Princess Santa Borghese of Rome; Hemendra Rakhit of India; and Dr. Augustus O. Thomas.

This proposal, which follows the current practice of appointing military and commercial attachés in each country, is well designed to promote better understanding of the educational ideals and experiences of other nations.

2. Scholarships to Graduate Students

In order to develop leaders in each country familiar with the life and leaders of other countries, the Conference recommended that the various governments, universities, schools and other educational organizations of the world be requested to appropriate money for graduate scholarships for students in international civics, economics and comparative education.

The number of foreign scholarships established by individual endowments like the Rhodes Scholarships and by clubs and alumni associations, has been slowly increasing for a number of years. This will be an organized effort to augment these and to develop and make available a general exchange of opportunities for advanced university work in different countries to the field of international relations.

3. Federation of Educational Associations

The coordination of the various agencies throughout the world having to do with education into a permanent federation was the most important single achievement of the Conference, for it will result in bringing 5,000,000 teachers into fruitful and sympathetic relaions with one another.

The name adopted for the new organization is the "World Federation of Educational Associations." Its object is "to secure international cooperation in educational enterprises, to foster the dissemination of information concerning education in all its forms among nations and peoples, to cultivate international good will, and to promote the interests of peace throughout the world." The headquarters of the organization are to be located temporarily in the United States. A world conference in full session is planned to meet every alternate year, but a meeting of sections—one in Europe, one in America and one in Asia—is to be held each intervening year.

Following are the officers who will direct the policies of the Federation for the next two years:

President—Augustus O. Thomas, State Commissioner of Education, Augusta, Maine.

Vice-Presidents—Mr. Edgar J. Sainsbury, Thames, Ditton Surrey, England.
Dr. M. Sawayanagi, Takada-Machi, Tokio, Japan.

Secretary-Treasurer—Mr. C. H. Williams, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.

Regional Directors for America—Mr. N. D. Showalter, President Washington State Normal School, Cheney, Washington.

Mr. Harry Charlesworth, 628 Battery Street, Victoria, B. C., Canada.

Regional Directors for Europe—Dr. Athenagoras Kavadas, 218 Haight Street, San Francisco, Calif.

Mr. George C. Pringle, 47 Moray Place, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Regional Directors for Asia—Mr. Rajaram V. Gogate, 2026 Center Street, Berkley, Calif.

Dr. P. W. Kuo, National Southeastern University, Nanking, China.

Representing as it does the educational forces of every nation the Federation promises to be a new and powerful instrument for world peace.

4. Greater Unification in Science

A greater unification of the terminology of Science as a means toward more effective cooperation between nations was the final proposal of Group A. Specifically, it recommended, among other things, the universal adoption of the metric system, and the appointment of a committee of three to serve as a clearing house for the interchange of information and suggestion in this field.

GROUP B.—DISSEMINATION OF EDUCATION INFORMATION

1. Exchange of Educational Periodicals and Articles

The Conference voted to undertake the organization of a permanent bureau of research and publicity whose duties shall be to:

(a) Make research studies on the various phases of educational development in the different countries.

(b) To publish an International Digest of Education.

(c) To furnish information concerning the publications of different countries so as to facilitate the exchange of periodicals and articles.

(d) To publish special studies on education from time to time.

2. Universal Library Service

It was also resolved to establish a universal library bureau to supply any nation upon request books, pamphlets and magazines for use upon any subject within the scope of the conference, and to cooperate with the library associations of the various nations in setting up definite standards of service. National library bureaus to serve as a medium between the citizens of each country and the world library bureau were also recommended.

3. Exchange of Teachers and Professors

The Conference endorsed the exchange of professors, and recommended the extension of the practice to all groups, including kindergarten, elementary and high school teachers.

The exchange system which met with much favor before the war but which was checked at that time, has already proved an admirable means of promoting international understanding and good will and should be consistently developed.

4. International University

A committee was authorized to investigate the question of the establishment of a world university, and, if feasible, to recommend a plan of procedure as early as possible.

GROUP C.—CONDUCT BETWEEN NATIONS

1. Text Book Material

In many countries, since the war, school textbooks have been subjected to critical scrutiny as potent factors, whether for good or ill, in the development of international relations. In order to make sure that the information obtained by school children about other countries is presented to them with scrupulous accuracy and in a spirit of fairness and good will, the Conference made the following specific recommendations:

1. That an exchange of textbooks in use be effected between all countries.
2. That these textbooks be studied especially with a view to correcting misrepresentations about any country and to furnishing material that will foster international friendship.
3. That a series of international readers be prepared, based upon the biographies and the best literature of all nations.
4. That especially history, civics, and geography textbooks (including international law) emphasize the interdependence of all members of the human family, and the necessity of peace as an essential condition of the highest human development; and that suggestions be formulated for inculcating the same principle through the teaching of science and the arts.
5. That suggestions be formulated for the most effective use of all forms of visual education in the promotion of international justice and good will.

2. World Civics and Ethics

The Conference also recommended the development in each country of a course in world civics and ethics having the following objects in view:

1. That this training stress the common interests and purposes and the interdependence of mankind.

2. That this training emphasize the need and possible means of cooperation among nations for the realization of these common interests and purposes.

3. That this training be developed not as a separate subject in the course of study, but as a phase of all existing subjects supplemented by pupil activities.

4. That this training be continuous from the earliest grades throughout the school career.

5. That an essential part of this training be the establishment of actual contact between the children of different countries through the medium of activities in which the children participate.

3. Correspondence Among School Children

International school correspondence and the appointment of an educational representative in each country to cooperate with other agencies in developing such interchange of thought and interests between the children of all nations was recommended.

Admirable work in this field has already been inaugurated with much success by the Junior Red Cross.

GROUP D.—INTERNATIONAL IDEALS.

1, 2. Division of Character Education

After considerable study and discussion, the Conference adopted an outline plan for character education to be worked out in detail by each cooperating nation, the object being to develop in children and the youth of the world "a sense of justice and an attitude of good will toward all mankind together with habits of action in accord with justice and love of humanity."

3. World Peace

As a direct step in the promotion of world peace, the Conference made the following recommendations for the teaching of history, geography and literature:

History. (a) That a universal aim in teaching the history of a country should be to teach the social, economic, and political development of the nation, and to show the relationships of these three lines of activities to similar lines of development in other countries of the world.

(b) That the teaching of history should be begun in the early grades and history should be taught from the world point of view.

(c) That instruction in history should include the teaching of specific principles which directly promote international good-will, such as, impartial judgment, justice, national and personal modesty, cooperation and honor.

Geography. (a) That a universal aim in teaching geography should be to make the citizens of each nation more intelligent about other peoples, their social conditions, their forms of government and their national ideals.

(b) That instruction in geography should include the teaching of specific principles which directly promote international good will, such as interdependence, courage, enterprise, neighborliness and mutual understanding.

Literature. That instruction in literature should include the teaching of specific principles which directly promote international good will, such as appreciation, courtesy, unselfishness, service, truthfulness and human sympathy.

4. The Debt of the Present Generation to the Future

The Conference recognized the substantial efforts which have already been made to teach world friendship through the schools, as evidenced by courses in citizenship and good will now in use, and recommended that future plans be based on "the great educational background established by the devoted efforts of teachers to promote international comity."

5. International Good-Will Day

May 18, the anniversary of the opening of the First Hague Conference, was selected as International Good-Will Day, to be observed in all schools throughout the world, with instruction on the work of the Hague Conference and more recent efforts to bring the world together in a cooperative body, accompanied by national and international songs, plays and pageants which carry out the spirit of the day.

OTHER GROUP PROGRAMS

Besides the group programs already outlined, the Conference adopted comprehensive plans for the development of health education, universal education, including a world campaign to abolish illiteracy, and rural life conservation. *

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* The health resolutions provided for an International Health Education Section of the World Federation; weighing and measuring of school children; emphasis in the school health program upon "positive health teaching, imbued with the spirit of joyous living;" training of children under five years of age in health habits; teaching nutrition values; health and dental examinations; nurse-training; athletics; health courses for all teachers in training.

Resolutions embodying the plans of the Federation for the creation of an international commission on illiteracy, thrift education, balance of liberal and vocational education, the education of women, better rural schools and the equalization of educational opportunity for all children, were also adopted.

CO-SHARERS IN THE WORLD'S CIVILIZATION

Although not called as a peace conference, this great meeting of the teachers of every land cannot fail to bring the nations of the world into closer sympathy and understanding.

The real spirit of internationalism, Dr. Thomas, President of the new Federation, defined in these terms:

> "Citizenship today must be broader than nationalism. There must be an international consciousness; there must be an 'international heart,' and a 'world mind.' This 'world mind' is largely an attitude or habit of thinking in the larger units of the world and the habit of regarding the nations as cooperating parts of the great whole. It is learning to measure other peoples by their own standards and getting their point of view. It is a recognition of those great virtues, attitudes, traits, and ideals which constitute national character. The question now is, 'Has the world progressed to such a point or will it ever come to such a point in the fundamental principles of morality that the nations can live together as sharers of the world's civilization?' "

This was the question which it was hoped the Conference would answer affirmatively, this is the goal of its program.

The function of education in developing such world unity was indicated by William B. Owen, President of the National Education Association, in his address of welcome at the opening of the Conference:

> "The world is one. Science, invention, industry, commerce, communication, transportation, contemplate and act on this view. Government, imperialism, diplomacy, militarism, have all tried to unify and hold in subjection the life of the world. Human nature is more powerful than any external form of institutional control that society has produced. The one outstanding possibility that has never been given a fair and full trial is education. Why not try it? This is the reason for calling this conference. We would not belittle or ignore the unifying and fundamental function of government, nor of diplomacy in its place, nor of a system of national defense in the world of present reality. But while we utilize other traditional forms of social control, we want to try what can be done through education. As a means of developing and insuring peaceful international cooperation no one can claim that it has ever been tried. We are going to begin here and now."

Dr. Owen also pointed out the present anomaly between our professed faith in education and our actual reliance on arms and the threat of power:

> "It is astonishing to observe in all the literature on world recovery the pathetic confidence in education as the sole remedy for our ills and to contrast with this diagnosis the feeble efforts made to apply the one approved remedy. In spite of what we write and say, the world does not believe that education as a form of social control is comparable with armies, navies, diplomacy and statecraft."

In conclusion, he outlined the general principles on which educational theory, in relation to internationalism, should rest, stressing particularly the goal which the National Education Association had set before it in calling the Conference:

> "A fair and dispassionate realism in education will start with the Nations and peoples of the world as they are. It will recognize the value of what each nation is and has to offer to the life of the world. It will seek world betterment, not in the dissolving of national life into a hypothetical and doctrinaire internationalism, but in an international cooperation that will preserve and cherish the personality of each nation while it contends against blindness, ignorance, retarding hate, and mutual suspicion. The National Education Association of the United States is composed of teachers passionately devoted to their country and deliberately patriotic in the service they render. But they want to cooperate with all teachers from all lands in the effort to make war and international injustice perish from the earth and make understanding, appreciation, mutual self-respect, and fair play control men's conduct at home and abroad."

OUTSTANDING RESULTS OF THE CONFERENCE.

A concrete program for the development of international understanding through the schools, and the organization of a permanent world association of educators to carry it out were the two outstanding results of the Conference.

Nations, even higher civilized nations, continue to be vastly ignorant of one another. Misunderstanding, suspicion and hatred have not only characterized international relations to a shameful degree, but they have actually been fostered in schools and textbooks in every land. Who of the older generation in the United States did not get a prejudice against Great Britain in studying American history? Are not traditional hatreds being handed down now in Europe? This way lies war.

The World Conference of Educators may mark an epoch in human history because it set its face against this poisoning of world life at its source. Light alone can dispel darkness; good will alone can conquer hate. The schools of the world are the hope for permanent peace. Enlightened world opinion must have its roots here. Here the peace movement will be made or marred. The thinking of the world can be changed in a generation through the schools. It is the task of right-thinking people who appreciate the gravity of the world situation to cooperate with the new World Federation in carrying out the principles adopted by this Conference without delay.